

## Incident at Castle Byers by flippyspoon

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**Summary:**

Will learns something about Billy Hargrove and feels a little less alone.

## Incident at Castle Byers

### Author's Note:

- Translation into Español available: [Incidente En El Castillo Byers \[Traducción\]](#) by [SolaEnElBosque](#)

The song playing was “Kiss on My List.” It was a song Will knew Jonathan didn’t like, but his mom did and would sing along to it when it came on the radio. Will liked it okay. It was blaring inside the house where everyone was hanging out but Will had snuck off to be outside by himself. He thought of escaping to Castle Byers, just for a few minutes. He loved them, all of them, but sometimes everybody all at once was too much. He stood swaying around the side of the house, hidden a bit in the shadows so that Billy Hargrove didn’t notice him when he came out, muttering to himself and lighting a cigarette.

Will didn’t really *know* Billy, but he knew about him. He knew Billy had once beat up Steve Harrington really badly but now he helped them beat up monsters, that he could be kind of a jerk still but he wasn’t *awful* (anymore) and also that his dad hit him a lot. Will only knew the last part because of Max (though she said nobody was supposed to know) and it made Will feel sorry for Billy even if he was a big scary senior with too many muscles and too mean a look in his eye. Still, Will had once looked the Mind Flayer in the face and screamed at it to back the hell off, so even a big scary senior wasn’t the terror he once might have been.

There was something sort of fascinating about him too. Will had a tendency to pick up on the soft parts of people they kept hidden, inwardly sifting through them, wondering how they ever learned to hide the soft parts. Will had never figured out how to hide the soft parts.

Will watched Billy blow a cloud of smoke through his nose and thought of an angry dragon. Billy was staring into the kitchen window and then he moved so that a light hit him and Will saw the expression on his face. He didn’t look angry now at all, he looked sad and...helpless, like somebody dry mouthed in the desert, water just

out of their reach. Will was curious and he stepped lightly, quiet, around the back of Billy to see his eyeline through the window.

Billy was staring at Steve. There was nobody else in the kitchen, only Steve Harrington bopping along to “Kiss on My List” and looking kind of silly as he danced while consolidating leftover pizza into one box.

There was no mistaking the way Billy was looking at Steve, it was just the way Mike looked at Eleven and Jonathan looked at Nancy.

The thought was like an epiphany to Will as he stood there.

The big scary senior was like *him*.

Will stepped on a twig and Billy jerked and turned, glowering, and his face relaxed as he looked down at Will.

“Jesus, kid,” Billy said. “Stealthy, aren’t you?”

Will coughed and scrambled for something normal to say. “You’re allowed to smoke inside,” he said. “My mom smokes inside all the time.”

Billy nodded and said, “Just wanted some air.”

“Oh,” Will said, nodding back. “Yeah. Me too.”

Billy leaned back against the house and sort of regarded Will. “You’re the one that started this whole thing, huh? I mean not that you had a choice, getting snagged by a beastie and all that...”

“Yeah.” Will crossed his arms. “I’m Zombie Boy.”

“Right,” Billy said, tittering. “Zombie Boy.”

Will had a strong urge to let Billy somehow *know*. I’m like *you*. Maybe Billy wouldn’t care, maybe he really was as mean as he looked but...

“Do you wanna see my castle?” Will blurted out, and his cheeks warmed, he felt so stupid.

“Castle?” Billy’s brows drew together.

“It-it’s just like a clubhouse,” Will said. “I built it. Nevermind.”

Billy glanced back at the house and Will saw a flash of that sad, helpless expression again and Billy said, “Yeah sure. Why not? Party in there isn’t my scene anyway.”

Will considered this a little victory and led Billy out to the castle which was beyond the backyard and down a little hill into the woods, and Billy chatted, filling the quiet.

“Seems like you’re always in trouble anyway,” Billy said. “You probably need a bodyguard for this shit. Even in your own backyard, I guess.”

“Probably,” Will said, and smiled, easy. Good, he thought. Good conversation.

Somehow Billy had the grace not to smoke in the castle but Will almost laughed at how funny he looked; big tough Billy Hargrove with his earring, hunching over inside the castle on the half-collapsed couch. He gazed around at Will’s nicknacks and art projects and pictures hung up on the branch walls, and nodded, his mouth turned down into an expression of wry approval.

“Not bad,” Billy said. “If you gotta get away. My castle is my car.”

“Oh,” Will nodded in understanding. “Right.”

Billy reached over and took Will’s microscope off its little table and examined it and Will thought of two things he wanted to say and wondered if he would have the nerve.

“Your earring is cool,” Will said. That was the first thing, that was easy.

Billy smiled a little and said, “Thanks.”

The second thing was a lot harder. But he knew he was right. There was always the chance that he was right and that Billy would still get angry if Will said something about it. From what Will had heard,

Billy could get *really* angry. Dustin said he was a born Barbarian.

Will licked his lips and said, "My...my dad said boys who wear earrings are faggots." He took a breath and Billy looked up sharply, squinting. "He's a...real jerk though. I mean he used to call me that sometimes too. A...a fag."

*Stupid, this is so stupid, even if he's like me he's going to think I'm stupid-*

"Yeah," Billy said, matter-of-fact. "My dad calls me that all the time. Total asshole."

Will nodded hard, head spinning a little. "Yeah."

Will felt sort of *amazing* at just that bit of understanding.

"I am though," Will said quickly, and breathed in like the Mind Flayer might be clutching his lungs.

He'd never said it to anyone, not even Jonathan.

Billy's bright blue eyes got really big for just a second and he said, "What?"

"A...*faggot*. I am one."

Will knew well enough that if you said that to almost anybody at Hawkins High or Hawkins Middle who wasn't Jonathan, you were in for a really bad time probably. Maybe Mike would be nice because Mike was his best friend in the world but even he would think it was weird at first.

He waited. The castle was quiet. He could hear Billy breathing.

Will felt like he was sort of leaving his body for a second. Billy was *staring* at him hard.

Finally Billy said, as if he were suddenly exhausted, "*Shit*." Billy rubbed his eyes. "Kid. *Why* are you telling me this?"

Will started to panic. "B-because...because...W-well, I thought, I thought-'

"Alright alright," Billy said. "Okay. Calm down, Byers. Listen to me. You can't just go saying that to somebody. I mean... Listen, you gotta be fuckin' *careful*. And...don't call yourself that for Christ's sake. Jesus."

"B-but," Will said, "I-I like..I like..."

"Ya like boys."

"Yeah."

"Okay. But... faggot is what our shitty dads call us. Alright? So don't call yourself that."

"So...you are too?" Will said.

*Please tell me. Please say yes.*

"Yeah. Yeah, I am." He frowned at Will, looking vaguely frightened.

"I...never met any other boy before who..." Will shrugged.

"That you know of," Billy said dryly. "Yeah. Fuckin' Hawkins."

"Yeah," Will said, and tried to affect an air something like Billy. "Fucking Hawkins."

"Hey Byers," Billy said. "How the hell did you know about me? You psychic or something? Like from the-"

"No." Will laughed a little. "No, I... It's the way you look at Steve."

Billy laughed then and muttered, "Jesus Christ. That's just great."

"I don't think anyone else can tell," Will said, hoping to make him feel better.

"Yeah, well let's hope not."

"You like him," Will said.

"Ugh. Way too much."

Will grinned at that, even though it was a little bit sad the way Billy said it. "Well...maybe he likes you too though."

"Sometimes I wonder," Billy said. "But he was really into Nancy."

"Maybe though." Will rubbed his lips together and thought of Steve. Steve and Billy argued a lot but sometimes he saw Steve smiling when they argued like it was his hobby. Sometimes he talked about Billy to the boys so much that Dustin got irritated and loudly interrupted to talk about literally anything else. "He talks about you a lot," Will said.

"It can't be anything good," Billy said.

"Sometimes it is!" Will insisted. "When you're nice he *smiles* and when you're...ya know..."

"Kind of a dick?" Billy supplied.

"Yeah," Will said. "When you're kind of a dick, that makes him laugh."

"No kidding?"

"Yeah."

Billy sat with that for minute, chewing on his thumbnail. "Hm."

"So...maybe he does! Maybe...try to be nice more though."

Billy seemed slightly rattled at the idea. "Hey, we should get back in," he said, checking his watch. "Don't want the others thinkin' I kidnapped you or some shit."

Will nodded and followed Billy back to the house but halfway there Billy stopped him and squatted a little to look him in the eye. "Say listen, Byers. Anybody gives you shit like callin' you fag or zombie boy or something you don't like, you tell me. Right?"

Will laughed a little at that. "Well, Jonathan usually."

"Yeah yeah, I know. Big brother and all. I know he messed up

Harrington pretty good once, but he can't intimidate. I can run em' off with a look. Okay? Just...keep it in mind."

"Okay." Will said. It was weird to think a tough guy like Billy also liked boys just like he did. In movies when a guy liked guys it was never like that. "Thanks."

"No problem."

Back in the house, the hubbub of people had quieted a little bit but it sounded like everyone was playing a game in the living room. Steve found them in the kitchen and Will noticed him light up when he saw Billy walk in and Will bit back a secret smile.

"Hey!" Steve said. "Where've you two been?"

Billy's lip curled and he started to open his mouth but before he could speak Will said, "He wanted to see Castle Byers!"

Billy looked down at him and raised an eyebrow. "Uh. Yeah."

"Really?" Steve seemed surprised by that. "Well, Castle Byers is pretty awesome."

"Yeah," Billy said, clearing his throat. "It's a classy joint."

Steve smiled in the way that Will had noticed he smiled if Billy was being nice and Will nudged Billy's arm. Billy said, "Um..."

"C'mon," Steve said, and nodded in the direction of the living room. "We're playing charades."

"Charades?" Billy said. "Can't you just give me a root canal with a rusty fork and be done with it, Harrington?"

At that, Steve snorted a laugh and Will nudged Billy's arm again. Steve's brows drew together and he pointed at Will. "What's *that* about?"

"Nothing!" Billy said. "Kid's got a tick. He's a weird kid."

"Yeah," Will said happily. "I'm a weird kid. Billy, c'mon, let's play



charades with *Steve!*”

Will yanked on Billy’s arm which was a little like yanking on a marble statue but Billy let himself be pulled into the living room, though his eyes were fixed on Steve who followed, smiling softly and shoving his hands in his pockets.

*They like each other*, Will thought. And it felt like a second victory.

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The next time Will saw Billy Hargrove was a week later. Will was hanging around near Melvald’s by himself, waiting for his mom to get off work. He was leaning on a mailbox with his Merlin, an electronic handheld game, playing Mindbender, when Troy and James came along. After the Mind Flayer Troy and James seemed less scary too, though on a purely practical level, Troy had forced Mike to jump off the *quarry* so...

“Hey, zombie fag!”

That was Troy.

*Shoot.*

Will hunched over a little and tried to hide the Merlin behind his back. It had been a gift from his mom for Christmas and gifts were never easily replaceable. He’d wanted one *forever*, always grabbing Mike’s to mess around with when he was at the Wheeler’s.

“”Whatcha got there?” James said, and reached back to grab it from Will. “Ooh, a Merlin.”

“Give it back,” Will said, clenching his fists.

“I always wanted a Merlin,” Troy said. “Actually I *have* one but I could use a second one.”

“Give it *back*.”

“Shut up, fag.”

“HEY.”

That was Billy, appearing like a genie from a bottle, all in denim with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. He scowled down at Troy and James who now seemed tiny by comparison.

“You hassling Byers?” Billy said, rasping around his smoke.

Troy and James gaped at each other as if they weren’t sure whether to say yes or no. Which was fair, since Billy was reputed to be somebody who should be on their side of a fight.

Troy said, “Uh-”

“I think I heard Byers say to give him his game back,” Billy said, and his scowl was like murder. He took the cigarette out of his mouth and pointed at them with it. “So give him his game back, shitbird.”

James swallowed and handed the Merlin back to Will. “Sorry,” he muttered.

“You two mess with Byers ever again,” Billy said, “and I’ll tear your arms off like Chewbacca. Got it?”

“Uh huh,” Troy said.

“Uh huh, no problem,” James said.

Will could practically see them sweating

“Good,” Billy said lightly. “Glad we’re clear on that. Go tell your friends. Now get lost!”

Will watched them run like the wind and almost felt sorry for them. His mother said he felt sorry for people too much sometimes.

“You good, Byers?” Billy said.

“Yeah,” Will said. “Thanks.”

“Any time,” Billy said, shrugging.

“Oh, man,” Will said. “Steve should know you did that! He’d really like that! Like...standing up to bullies instead of being one and-”

“Aw, kid, c’mon. You’re killin’ me, Byers.”

“No, really!”

“Guys!”

Steve.

Steve!

Will grinned as Steve Harrington came strolling towards them from the direction of Melvald’s, hair blowing back, looking happy to see them. He saw Billy roll his eyes and look a little bashful suddenly.

“What’s goin’ on?” Steve said. “I was just-”

“Billy was defending me from bullies!” Will said quickly.

Steve shot a look at Billy who squeezed his eyes shut as if this was the most embarrassing in the world, which Will didn’t completely understand because Steve looked *very* happy and surprised about it, his eyebrows shooting up.

“What’s that?” Steve said.

“He didn’t hurt them though!” Will said, wanting to put Billy in the best possible light. “He just scared them off. It was awesome.”

“Well, look at you,” Steve said, grinning. “Mr. Heroic.”

“He *is*,” Will said. “He’s really nice now, Steve-”

“*Will*.” Billy reached over to squeeze his shoulder. He was turning red.

“What’re you guys up to?” Steve said, eyes on Billy. He bit his bottom lip.

“Nothin’,” Billy said.

“I’m just waiting for my mom to get off work,” Will said. “But she had to go over. So I have another half an hour.”

“Come get shakes with me,” Steve said, nodding over at the diner.

“Or whatever you want. I’m buying.”

“Okay sure,” Billy said, scratching his head. He said to Will, “Hey, you should probably tell your mom huh? So she doesn’t worry.”

“Good call,” Steve said.

“Okay, Harrington, okay,” Billy snarked. “Don’t get so excited.”

Will looked up at them staring at each other and inwardly he triumphed.

“I didn’t figure you for strawberry,” Steve said.

A thick glass of pink milkshake sat in front of Billy and he narrowed his eyes. “Why not?”

“I dunno,” Steve said, drinking a spoonful of his chocolate. “Just don’t strike me as a strawberry milkshake guy.”

“There’s a lot you don’t know about me,” Billy said. He was smiling just the way Nancy did when she was flirting with Jonathan.

“Clearly,” Steve said.

Will had a rootbeer float and he watched them as if he were in science at school studying chemical reactions. There was something so *nice* about it, although a part of him grieved. It didn’t seem like a boy would ever like him the way Billy and Steve seemed to like each other. But he didn’t want to be sad while Billy and Steve looked so happy and he took a breath and a spoonful of vanilla ice cream.

Billy and Steve talked a little about basketball and then Billy got curious about the Merlin and Will showed him out it worked and Will didn’t miss the way Steve wore a soft smile while Billy played Mindbender, his tongue sticking out a little as he mashed the buttons with his thumbs.

“My mom only got it because they still give her a good discount at Radio Shack,” Will said, and his heart sank a bit at the thought of Bob. “Otherwise we’d never afford it.”

"Hmm." Billy said. "Know how that goes. When I was about your age I hit a growth spurt, but I had to keep wearing the same clothes till I was busting out of em'. They called me 'Highwaters' at school because my pants were too short. Dicks."

"You're still busting out of em' though," Steve blurted and then he frowned and sucked on his straw.

Billy beamed at that. "Now *Harrington* on the other hand," Billy said, pointing at Steve. "He's loaded. The Izod shirts, the BMW, the *mansion*-"

"Okay," Steve said. "I get it. It's not a mansion though. C'mon, dude." But he didn't look unhappy at the way Billy teased him. They were both smiling as Billy fidgeted with his straw, poking at his shake.

"We should go hang out at Harrington's," Billy said, nudging Will. "See how the other side lives."

"You can hang out at my house," Steve said, and his fingers tapped on the table close to Billy's hand. "You can hang out...Friday night?"

"Ah, yeah," Billy said, his voice pitching up funny. "Okay-"

"Oh, Will, ya know you can come too if um..." Steve stuttered.

Will was clearly an afterthought but he didn't mind that in this particular situation and felt like a genius for having the presence of mind to say, "Oh, I'm going to Mike's on Friday." Happily, it was true.

"Oh. Good. I mean..." Steve shrugged and leaned on his hand. His eyes met Billy's. "Just you and me then I guess, Hargrove."

"Okay," Billy mumbled around his straw, the corner of his mouth turning up. He tapped on the table.

Will stared at their hands so close on the table. Nobody was looking at him and so they didn't know that he saw Steve's fingers nudge Billy's and Billy's fingers close over his for a couple of seconds before they parted again on the table. He heard them breathe when it happened. It was almost like watching a kiss.

Then things felt a different, like the energy in the air had changed, the two older boys acting as if they'd been caught at something though they looked so happy about it and Billy ruffled Will's hair and laughed when they left the diner. Steve was shift, loitering by a streetlight, looking back at Billy who waited by Will. He clearly wanted to keep hanging out with Billy.

"Hey," Billy said, squatting down to talk to Will out of Steve's earshot. "So maybe you were right after all."

"Yeah!" Will said, and then whispered, "He *likes* you."

"Yeah," Billy squinted over at Steve who was still watching them. "I think maybe he does."

Will nodded. He didn't want to feel sad, he didn't *want* to-

"Hey. Byers? What's the matter?" Billy said.

"Nothing." Will swayed on his feet and swallowed. "I just... I don't think a boy will look at me like that. Like Steve looks at you."

"Ah..." Billy sighed and met his eyes. "Listen. You're in Hawkins. So it totally sucks. It'll probably suck for a while. But, ya know. You're a cool kid. And...you're a sweetheart type, right? Kinda like Steve, huh?"

Will blushed at that and ducked his head. "I guess."

"There *will* be boys," Billy said, squeezing his shoulder. "I promise."

"Yeah?" Will said. And he almost believed him.

"Oh yeah," Billy said, tossing him a wink. "You're gonna break hearts, kid."

"Thanks," Will said.

"Anytime, like I said."

"He still wants to talk to you," Will said, nodding over at Steve who quickly turned away, pretending to fidget with his jacket. "Go talk to

your *boyfriend*.”

Billy snorted a laugh at that. “You’re killin’ me, Byers.”

“Go!”

Billy ruffled his hair again and jogged off to talk to Steve and when they both glanced back, Will waved goodbye and went into Melvald’s to see his mom, but he peeked back around the door and leaned far enough to watch them go. He saw Steve’s hand fidget with the hem of Billy’s jacket as they walked and then it snuck up underneath it to rest on Billy’s lower back and he saw Billy’s eyes glimmer in the setting sun as he looked over at Steve and Will felt something bloom inside him and believed what Billy had said as he grinned to himself and went inside.

*There will be boys.*

**Works inspired by this one:**

- [Like Watching A Kiss](#) by [avalonlights](#)